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FRESHMAN ENGLISH ONCE MORE—*Concluded*

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For a long time I have considered whether we should not do well to inquire into the conditions in respect to reading which were experienced by our great writers in the days when the ancient-language discipline was the inevitable discipline. If we were to do so, we should observe, I think, that typically the reading which formed the background of training in style fell into two distinct classes: first, the intensive reading in limited amounts of Greek or Latin writers; and, second, the ordinary reading in large amounts, sometimes, no doubt, of classical authors, but more often of modern authors who wrote in the student's own language or in foreign tongues. This association of umbra and penumbra, of arduous reading at the center with freer reading on the circumference, is no doubt already vaguely paralleled in most of our courses in Freshman English. But the point of my harking back to an earlier state of things is in my special insistence upon the distinguishing feature of each element in this combination: the intensiveness with which the central reading was done and the extensiveness of the general reading which was its supplement. I believe that as a rule we secure in Freshman English neither intensive reading within the classroom nor extensive reading without, and I also believe that our best hope of improving our students' English through reading is in our continually insisting upon these two things.

I shall speak first of intensive reading. Here, in particular, I inquire what it was that an earlier generation obtained from their minute study of the classics that helped in the formation of their style. No doubt they got some things which in our own tongue we shall never obtain, but one thing which they got I believe our students can derive from the right study of English prose: an intimate

understanding of what is really involved in accurate and masterly expression. No adequate perception of this hard secret is likely to come to them of itself or from any amount of merely superficial study. It will not come to them from an occasional use of the dictionary, nor from listening to general discourses on the subject-matter of their reading, nor even, I fear, from the endless production of "logical outlines." It will come only, if at all, from the patient, concentrated, reflective consideration, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence—I had almost said word by word—of literary masterpieces. An extraordinary virtue of the long-established study of the ancient classics was precisely this—that no one who underwent its rigorous discipline could escape the necessity, in respect either to thought or form, of focusing his attention upon detail.

It must not be thought, however, that I am recommending a sad mechanical exercise. There can be little doubt that the ancient classics, especially in this country, have suffered greatly from the absence in many of their representatives of a truly humanistic spirit. The study which should have challenged every faculty, whether of observation or reflection, has only too often been restricted to the narrow dimensions of a linguistic science. Sometimes, even here, in the very Hesperides of literature, men have asked for bread and received a stone. Now I have no intention that the study of English prose for which I speak shall be either mechanical or dull; concentrated it will be, exacting it will be, but wherever there is a mind and personality at all capable of significant response, I shall expect it to exercise a permanent appeal.

I will try in several ways to make my meaning plainer. In many respects the kind of exercise which I am advocating resembles a course of study which obtained in certain American universities fifteen or twenty years ago, a course of study based upon some such book as Minto's *A Manual of English Prose Literature*. A course in English prose founded upon Minto's system of criticism makes concentrated study a necessity, fixes attention upon numerous details of style, and supplies to what may readily become vague and ineffective a definite vertebration. In these respects it is worthy of praise. Its imperfection, as I have observed it, lies in

its tendency to consider form too much as a thing by itself, a finished product to be somewhat coldly isolated and analyzed. If the study of expression is to have the highest vitality, content and form must always be considered, it seems to me, in their mutual relations.

The French method of studying literature known as *explication de textes*, as this method is described in the valuable book of Professor Brown's to which I have before alluded, *How the French Boy Learns to Write*, is, on the whole, an illuminating example of what I have in mind.

This method of studying literature seems to have had its origin in the explication of Latin and Greek texts. When, however, it came to be applied generally to the mother-tongue, it underwent so many changes in meeting the demands of a living language, that it is now quite different from the method employed in the study of the Classics. It is, in truth, when one considers the whole procedure and its spirit, almost unique in character. To be sure, it must partake of other methods of literary study; but in its proportion, its balance, its completeness, its intent, it is distinct. It is not merely the annotation of texts read carefully in class; it is not like our so-called appreciative study in which the teacher endeavors to lead the pupil, without too minute analysis on his part, to catch the spirit of an author or to see the beauty of his work; it is not any species of meat-axe criticism in which the teacher leaves only a chopped-up carcass for the edification of the pupil; and it is not a dry study of words, or an overminute study of grammar or rhetoric. It is, rather than any of these, an exercise that aims to seize upon and unfold an author's purpose and his meaning so that the pupil will be in a condition of mind to react with intelligence on what the author has said. It includes the study of words, of grammatical and rhetorical principles, the making of close analysis, and the exercise of judgment; but these are all subordinate to the one purpose of catching the full force of the author's meaning. It is not exclusively historical, biographical, or critical; it combines the best parts of all three. It is an attempt to get rid of all the mental friction possible, so that what a writer has said will find its way into the pupil's deepest consciousness.

In this interesting description (interesting, although on the side of style a certain unscrupulousness, a willingness to sacrifice elegance to mere energy—well, what would a lycée professor think of such a phrase as “meat-axe criticism,” and the rest?) I remark especially the words which stand for so much in French ideals: proportion, balance, completeness; it is clear that the French teacher keeps himself alert to the true complexity of the object

which he undertakes to expound, resolutely refrains from sacrificing the whole to some particular part. He insists on what one may call an organic treatment of his piece of literature. And yet, because in the *explication de textes* the French teacher has for his single aim the interpretation and realization of ideas, the process which I wish to establish in Freshman English involves one appreciable difference. In Freshman English our end would be, not merely realization of ideas, fundamental as that certainly is, but combined with this an understanding of the rhetorical means by which those ideas found their adequate expression. For I have not forgotten that my professed business in Freshman English is a many-sided task—the cultivation in the student of a mastery of self-expression in English speech.

There is such a thing as creative reading as well as creative writing; the one process is the reverse of the other. It is possible to read with such a fulness of realization, such an obstinate inquiry into the connotation of words and ideas, such a perception of relations between the thought and its instrument, as almost to re-enact in one's own mind the original drama of expression. This single phrase "creative reading" will serve well enough for the kind of prose study that I desire for a part of our classroom work in Freshman English. I recommend a process through which the student is enabled to feel in a high degree the intellectual and emotional satisfaction that would be experienced by a reader of ideal knowledge and cultivation. When on finishing the study of a page or a chapter the student knows the meaning and value of every word; when he has entered as fully as his experience permits into the significance of the ideas expressed, and has understood their mutual relations; when he has clearly observed in characteristic literary effects the operation of rhetorical principle—then he has altogether realized the type of exercise which I am attempting to describe.

I express myself in terms of the ideal; in practice we shall hardly climb so high. But one thing is certain: we shall never remotely approximate the ideal until we are ready to limit the amount of reading which we do to a degree which will at first appear extraordinary, until we perceive that what really matters is not *how much* we read but *how* we read. When we have so limited it,

what seems to me the most plausible objection to my proposal will shortly disappear. It may be natural to think that it is impossible to give to this nicely balanced intensive reading a sufficient substance and coherence, that it must tend to vagueness or formlessness; but on this side I have absolutely no fear. Our safety lies in the very opportunity for accuracy and definiteness. On the other hand, once we give up trying to teach English prose in unmanageably large units, we shall be secure from our present dangers of empty formalism and superficiality.

Before I leave this matter I must say a word concerning the kind of prose that I should select as an object of study. I should, of course, choose classics, and, in general, classics of the nineteenth century. Our purpose is to see English prose at its best, giving a beautiful and expressive form to ideas of weight or subtlety, and exhibiting the language through the range of its resources and possibilities. In respect to type, exposition should, I think, predominate, not rarefied abstraction, but the literary presentation of ideas, instinct in its higher moments with personal force and imaginative energy. It may be considered unfortunate for our purposes that so many of our nineteenth-century masters exhibit distracting aberrations from a normal prose manner; but it is a misfortune which we cannot remedy. Our procedure must be to weigh advantages with disadvantages and at last to discover through slow experience what accords most perfectly with our design.

Implied in much that I have just been saying is a partial answer to one of the arguments advanced by those who ask us to use contemporary books and magazines in our classrooms. I will let Professor Cunliffe and Dr. Lomer, of the Columbia School of Journalism, present the argument:

Why does the teaching of English composition, to which modern schools and colleges give so much time and energy, yield unsatisfactory results? The main reason is, in our judgment, that it seems to be out of touch with reality; the pupil sees in his appointed tasks no connection with his life as it is or as it is likely to be. Accordingly he treats his themes as intellectual "stunts" that have to be gone through simply because they are part of the course, and he fails to apply in his everyday speech and writing the lessons he has learnt in the classroom. This sense of artificiality is partly due to the subjects he is

asked to write about and the literary models set before him for imitation. Stevenson acknowledges that he "played the sedulous ape" to Hazlitt, Lamb, Sir Thomas Browne, Montaigne, and other great writers of prose, but it does not follow that the average American youth can learn to write by the study of Newman, Pater, and Stevenson, even when their essays are elaborately analyzed and interpreted for him. He finds the subjects outside of his everyday interests and the mode of treatment altogether beyond his reach. The result is lassitude and discouragement.

The argument, I take it, amounts to this: that the study of classical prose as an aid to writing results in artificiality. It follows, of course, that to avoid artificiality we should forsake the classics and adopt the magazines. The point of view has its plausibility, but I greatly doubt its soundness. I do not need to inquire into the question as to whether or not immediate facility in composition is more readily promoted through contact with ordinary writing than through the study of great prose, for, as I have said before, I am in any case much less concerned with immediate than with ultimate results. I answer simply that a faithful and intimate study of what is excellent, it seems reasonable to suppose, will in the end contribute more fundamentally to one's skill as a writer than a corresponding attention to what is mediocre. The artificiality which is complained of is not an inevitable concomitant of the study of classics. We do not need to establish any definite and formal connection between the student's writing and his reading in the classroom, far less to ask him to imitate the great pages of Lamb or Hazlitt or Newman; from such procedures might naturally result the most discouraging emptiness and unreality. Our proper interest in the study of prose leads us into no such difficulties; we are concerned, not with the instant appropriation of particular detail, but with the understanding of principles, with the discovery and illustration of the underlying principles of expression; and it goes without saying that the place to realize our purposes most successfully is in the masters.

Another argument one hears from advocates of the contemporary turns on the assumption that what is produced in the present has for the student a strength of appeal that does not attach to the writings of an earlier period. We must occupy our students with the productions of yesterday in order to give to our literary

study a proper interest and reality. I content myself here with protesting that I believe the idea superficial and in its remoter implications utterly false. It is, as everybody knows, a mark of great literature that its concern is with what is central in human nature and in human life; and our students are after all only human beings a little younger than their elders. Generally speaking, if they turn away from the classics, it is because they have not understood them; and whatever unusual obstacles appear as a hindrance to understanding, it is the business of the teacher to remove. Surely there is no greater fallacy than to suppose that a nearness in time between writer and reader means *of necessity* a nearness in comprehension. The English classics, if they seem remote, are only apparently remote; and once this illusion is dispelled the normal student who devotes himself to them will experience a profound satisfaction in the presence of a richness of thought and a brilliancy of form that he will look for in vain in the average productions of the hour. And incidentally he will be providing himself in some degree with a standard of judgment in literature, without which the modern reader is altogether lost.

I should not have dwelt at all upon this cult of the contemporary¹ if it were not for the alarming rate at which the movement appears to be spreading throughout our schools and colleges. The present seems a fitting time for whoever believes in maintaining a sound tradition in the study of composition and literature to confess openly his faith. It is in connection with such matters as this that we may sometimes sigh for the presence in America of a centralized system of popular education.

I come now to the subject of "extensive reading," the second part, the penumbra, of the scheme I am proposing. Intensive study of literature is of very great importance to us because it teaches the student what enlightened reading is, it fixes his attention upon detail, and it forces him to see in practice the principles of expression; but in itself it is insufficient; it needs to be supplemented by the maximum amount of general reading. In its effect upon the

¹ See the article by O. W. Firkins, "The Cult of the Passing Hour," *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1914.

student's writing, "intensive reading" alone might tend to stiffness and formalism. "Extensive reading" supplies the natural corrective and in addition furnishes and stimulates the mind. Both ends which it subserves are important. In general, it is only through wide reading, through endlessly repeated contact with varying word and phrase and sentence, that our students will attain to freedom of expression. In general, it is only through wide reading that they will acquire the information and breadth of interest that will make it of any appreciable importance whether they write or not. Operating together, the one supplementing the other, "intensive reading" and "extensive reading" provide the natural background for the practice of composition.

It matters little what system is employed to secure general reading, so the reading is actually accomplished and a taste for reading is actually developed. One thing we may be sure of—that the average Freshman as we know him in our colleges today will do little general reading, especially reading of the order which we wish him to select, unless in response to one of two very definite forces: a strict requirement, or the personal influence of an enlightened and enthusiastic teacher. In any case, so crowded is the ordinary first-year curriculum, he cannot possibly read any very great amount during the time we have charge of him, so that it becomes especially important that we help him to form a habit that will keep him reading, and reading wisely, throughout his college course.

I have now finished a rapid survey of the chief questions to be considered in the organization of a course in Freshman English. I have assumed as the time at our disposal three hours a week for one year. My effort has been to recover the best of what in recent years we may have neglected or lost, and to preserve the best of what we ourselves have discovered. What, then, do I propose as the most effective practical solution of our insoluble problem? Reduced to brief statement, the following plan:

In respect to composition.—The placing of our major emphasis throughout the year upon the practice of writing, in association always with a study of the fundamental principles of rhetoric. Writing shall be approached as an art, not merely as a technical

convenience; authenticity, not formalism or imitation, shall be its watchword; description and narration shall not be sacrificed to exposition and argument. Rhetoric shall be taught with as much fulness as is practicable, but always on a dignified plane and in a scholarly spirit.

In respect to other elements.—The concentration within the classroom, for whatever time is available, upon the most intensive study of prose masterpieces; the insistence without the classroom upon varied and extensive reading.¹

I began by disclaiming any distracting responsibility for the general development of the student, and I have tried to keep in mind only our special aim; but I own that I take pleasure in the conviction that the type of course which I have outlined is at least as serviceable as any I have observed as a force for culture. If we do not regale the student with pleasant contemporary talk on manners and morals, we shall at any rate bring him into contact in an intimate fashion with the spiritual elements which are the warp and woof of literature. If we make no point of instructing him in special fields of knowledge, we shall at any rate exercise his mind on those central and permanent subjects which have ever occupied our intellectual leaders. And, in addition, through the simplification of our purposes and methods, we shall the more easily find time in which to realize from the practice of composition its own possibilities for the awakening of his curiosity and the enrichment of his life.

Now, it will be remembered that I do not claim any extravagant superiority for one type of course over another. Any course which gives a rigorous discipline in writing will accomplish something; and the most we can hope for, however skilful our emphasis, is but little. What I do say is this: that our plain duty is, first, having defined our purposes, to consider seriously what special agencies are likely in the end to produce the maximum of effect, and then to cling to those agencies, not in one college or university only,

¹ It should be observed that I hold to the inclusion in any normal Freshman English course of *all* the elements noted; it is not a question of doing any one thing with theoretical completeness, but of attaining such a combination of agencies as is likely to accomplish most.

but wherever similar conditions obtain, until we reap the advantage that comes from the establishment of a definite tradition.

Of the instructor in the course I propose I have hitherto said almost nothing, though it is plain that at every stage I have supposed him possessed of distinct ability. It is evident, for example, that in order to teach composition as I have conceived it he must possess skill in writing. Composition can never be adequately taught by one to whom the rules of rhetoric have not become second nature, but have remained mere rules. It is very curious, when one thinks of it, that a person should be allowed to teach an art in which he has scarcely begun an apprenticeship. Can it be expected that his instruction will be anything but stiff, dogmatic, untrue; that it will exhibit even a semblance of ease and flexibility? It is evident, moreover, that the type of intensive reading which I have described cannot be ideally carried on except by a person of some talent and much education. Only such a person can be expected to maintain a proper equilibrium among the various elements involved, to enter with full understanding into the meaning of his author, or to supply the connotation that gives to reading its true vitality. Knowledge both technical and general is required, and judgment, and literary sense, and tact; and I may be asked to explain where I shall find an adequate supply of instructors who possess these qualities.

To this question I should answer, first, that the average instructor in Freshman English, as he comes to us from year to year, will, in my judgment, do his students quite as much service in the course that I have outlined as in any other; and, secondly, that in any case I have little confidence in the final wisdom of a theory that we should fit the course to the instructor and not the instructor to the course. We shall never make the most of our work in Freshman English if we seriously modify our ideal in order to make it harmonize with the real or supposed deficiencies of our teachers. On the other hand, if we make entirely clear to ourselves and to everybody else what our ideal is, in respect both to methods and to standards, our less competent instructors will seek to rise to its level, and, what is perhaps much more important, we shall be able to be of definite assistance to the administrators of our graduate schools.

Here I am led into a territory where the battle still rages. By what means may our graduate courses be rendered most useful as a place of training for those who are to become instructors in our universities and colleges? The question is a large one; I shall make one suggestion.

It appears to me that what is needed in our graduate schools is a shifting of emphasis. Here too we sometimes give way to a seductive tendency and, eluding what is most difficult, concentrate upon what is really most easy. We emphasize too exclusively what somewhat oddly has come to be called "fact," and trust to other agencies for the cultivation of taste and judgment. Now, in so far as our tendency is to ignore in our teaching this relatively intangible but highly significant matter, we are in my opinion committing a grave error. Nor is a defense that I have heard in any degree reassuring. I have been astonished to hear it said, in substance or by implication, that the discipline which we provide must be primarily in "facts," because for anything of a superior order the student is unprepared. This defense, it seems to me, puts its sponsor in a very uncomfortable position. He nor anyone else will have the courage to deny that the equipment most needed in our teachers of English is breadth of culture and literary taste; and yet in full recognition of the truth he continues directing his energies toward a quite different and inferior object. If it be true that our students lack the background for work in a liberal field, it would seem to me our first plain duty to supply the deficiency.

There is indeed a more subtle apology, which is not without a measure of justification. It is said that the higher qualities of the teacher's equipment one has or one has not when one enters the graduate school, and if at that time one has them not, nothing will avail. An element of Calvinistic predestination which is sensible in this theory inclines me somewhat in its favor. But I do not think the procedure in the graduate school to which in practice it appears to lead will stand the test of serious argument. Let us examine it more closely.

We will take first the case of the student who enters the graduate school conspicuously lacking in literary culture. It is as well to ignore the obvious suggestion that the kindest thing to do would

be to advise a reconsideration of his plan of life. I assume that as time goes on he will in spite of us become a teacher of English. It is here that I weaken on the doctrine of foreordination. Even in the sternest of Puritan days, if I mistake not, it was supposed that "works" counted for something; if not, the logical Jonathan Edwards, as he withered his audience with images of sulphurous flame, was strangely illogical. I am not altogether sure that three years of training which involved wide reading directed and stimulated by men of humane culture and critical ability would not do something even with an unpromising student toward effecting that inner enlightenment without which the teaching of English is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. At all events, whether the fire from heaven fell or were withheld, the man who underwent such a discipline would have a clear understanding of where the true values lay, though he had not experienced them, and so might to some extent direct others where he could not go. I do not hesitate to say that it seems to me better to continue applying our energy in the right direction with the hope of some appreciable effect than to fall back discouraged upon the accomplishment of what, when all is said and done, is but a secondary object.

There remains the case of the superior student who brings to the graduate school acquaintance with literature and critical insight. It is said that such a student may well give himself to scientific investigation. I cannot think so. If he has already the beginnings of literary culture, what he now needs most of all is abundant reading and an opportunity for the exercise of his critical faculty. He needs in some fashion to experience what Milton knew at Horton—a rich maturing season in which to assimilate the long-accumulating wisdom of the master-minds. Nor should he be expected to dispense with the high advantage of wise supervision. Surely in the region of criticism as well as in the region of purely scientific scholarship we have something which we can teach. If he carries on restricted scientific investigation, let that at any rate require only a small fraction of his total time. For the most part let him have courses which afford ample opportunity for nourishing contact with literature, and in which the work he does is constantly

demanding the finer qualities necessary to enlightened teaching. I cannot see that from any point of view there is in this emphasis the possibility of loss. It is evident that the type of preparation I am asking for our instructors in Freshman English is the preparation which is indispensable for one who expects ultimately to make a mark for himself as a teacher of literature. And I cannot believe that any better preparation can be conceived, if one looks at the matter largely, for the development even of the scientific investigator. For surely literary research which can dispense with rich background and critical capacity must be of a quite unusual or inferior kind; surely literary research of a distinguished order requires distinguished faculties.

Assuming the present three-year graduate course leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as our only machinery, I suggest, therefore, that an effort be made to increase our emphasis upon the development of appreciation and judgment, both through the requirement of more extensive reading and through the insistence upon a constant exercise of the critical powers. No one who enters into my meaning will suspect that I am advocating an invertebrate or superficial discipline. Nor will anyone suppose that I am condemning what is beneficial in the training now offered. In fixing attention upon the importance of exact knowledge and in making a mastery of external fact an essential preliminary to criticism, the scientific work of our graduate schools has, no doubt, been of real service, not merely to the future investigator, but likewise to the future interpreter of literature. It is at any rate plain that no criticism can longer obtain a serious hearing which does not give evidence of genuine thoroughness. It is not a relaxation on this side that I desire, but a recognition of the indisputable truth that for the purposes of the future teacher of English the acquisition of mere "facts" is but a beginning, that the burden of his mission lies in another and far more difficult region.

I have thus far taken for granted the present graduate course. Great interest attaches, I think, to a proposal of Professor Brown's that we devise a new graduate course leading to a new degree for the advantage of those students who expect to teach. If this proposal were adopted, the present degree of Doctor of Philosophy

might retain a special significance as the appropriate degree for those whose interests or talents led them at once into the field of scientific investigation. The matter deserves thoughtful discussion. I restrict myself here to a short quotation from Professor Brown:

The most urgent need in university study of English today is a graduate course covering three or even four years that does not demand research primarily, or even largely. As our work is now carried on, a graduate student must stop with the A.M. degree, after one or two years of study, or he must give himself over to specialization in his field and to research leading to the Ph.D. If he chooses to spend one or two years in the graduate school after he receives his A.M., but does not choose to become a candidate for the Ph.D., he suffers the humiliation either of being looked upon as one who has fallen short, or of being regarded as having no definite purpose. We ought to have a university course of study in the mother-tongue that would correspond in certain respects to the work carried on in preparation for the *agrégation* in France. It would represent a deep foundation in the study of languages and a broad but accurate knowledge of the literature of the mother-tongue. The candidate would devote himself to regular advanced courses in his native language and literature, to wide reading, and to some intensive study. But he would not focus his chief effort upon a special field in which he is supposed to become competent "to advance knowledge." When he has finished his course he would submit himself to an examination covering thoroughly his entire field of study. As a fitting degree for this course, the Litt.D. might be transferred from the field of honorary degrees. The Ph.D. could then be kept as a mark of distinction for men who have special ability in research.

Except in the matter of this last proposal, I have hitherto assumed in the discussion of my problem the limits set by actual conditions. I wish now, before concluding, to make an earnest plea for an improvement in those conditions. Freshman English, a three-hour course for one year, can never do more than begin the adequate performance of the task that is laid upon it. For the moment I deliberately shut my eyes to the manifold question of English training in the secondary schools and think only of the college or university. One step in the right direction would be a substantial increase in our English requirement. Let us require training in English, not for one year only, but in one form or another for two years or even three years. What most of our students need is contact with the subject throughout their course, but I have not yet courage enough to suggest so obvious a truth. Now, of

course, one's first thought is that no university can be induced to extend much farther its present requirement; but I doubt whether this opinion should be taken as final. Once the English teachers of this country are agreed that the writing of our students will never be what it ought to be until more time is spent in the reading of literature and in the practice of composition, and once they present their unanimous conclusion to university officers, I believe that they will be heard. We can count on a general conviction among influential men in all walks of life that the ability to use English well is important; and what people consider important they will provide for. How best to employ the opportunity that would be afforded us by an extension of the requirement is a separate but secondary problem which need not concern us now. The important thing for the moment is a clear recognition of what an intelligent solution of our problem really requires and a vigorous presentation of our ideas to those who exercise control.

I return to the burden of my paper. My present object has been to examine once more the problem of Freshman English, not as it might be, but as it is. I have inquired whether the time may not have come for us to give a common answer to the question, What type of discipline is calculated to accomplish most? and, having answered it, to combine our forces in the effort to advance the chosen discipline to perfection. I have been bold enough to draw upon my own experience for a proposal as to what agencies are best adapted to our end; and I have outlined a possible first-year course in English in respect both to its outward form and to its inner spirit. Freshman English, it is true, is not a very impressive thing in the economy of the world or of the university, but if we study its possibilities on an ideal plane and remember how many thousands and thousands of students come yearly within the scope of its influence, we shall not fail to realize that it has an important claim upon our serious consideration.